



WASHINGTON BACH CONSORT

Dana Marsh, Artistic Director

Christmas Oratorio

Weihnachts-Oratorium, BWV 248

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)





bach interactions

Nine virtual programs offer some of the finest works in the cantata and oratorio repertory. You'll enjoy the Washington Bach Consort as you've never heard them before, but you'll also gain revelations and insights into the music itself coming from our two resident Bach scholars, Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed. Supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the J. Reilly Lewis Legacy Fund, Bach Interactions is a new digital concert experience offering the expressive heights of Bach's musical language as well as the story behind its creation.

The series features three renowned cantatas, *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 140, *Aus der Tiefen rufe ich, Herr, zu dir*, BWV 131, and *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, BWV 61, followed by all six parts of Bach's beloved *Christmas Oratorio*, BWV 248. Each part will be presented on its intended day of liturgical observance, over the twelve days of Christmas to the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6).

Bach Interactions is supported by gifts from the **J. Reilly Lewis Legacy Fund** and the **National Endowment for the Humanities**.

OUR MISSION

Founded in 1977 by the late Dr. J. Reilly Lewis, the Washington Bach Consort is a professional choral and orchestral ensemble based in Washington, DC that is committed to ensuring that current and future audiences experience the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and his contemporaries, by:

1. performing the music of Bach and his contemporaries to the highest artistic standards,
2. sharing the joy of Bach's music by broadening audiences in the nation's capital,
3. nurturing the appreciation of Bach's music through education and community outreach activities, and
4. interpreting the music of Bach for audiences of today, thereby ensuring his legacy.

CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

Weihnachts-Oratorium, BWV 248

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Dana Marsh, Artistic Director

Part I

Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf, preiset die Tage, BWV 248^I

Friday, 12.25.20 at 8 p.m. YouTube & Facebook



NEW YOUTUBE & FACEBOOK DATES ↓

Part II

Und es waren Hirten in derselben Gegend, BWV 248^{II}

Thursday, 1.7.21 at 8 p.m. on YouTube & Facebook

Part III

Herrscher des Himmels, erhöere das Lallen, BWV 248^{III}

Thursday, 1.14.21 at 8 p.m. on YouTube & Facebook

Part IV

Fallt mit Danken, fällt mit Loben, BWV 248^{IV}

Thursday, 1.21.21 at 8 p.m. on YouTube & Facebook

Part V

Ehre sei dir, Gott, gesungen, BWV 248^V

Thursday, 1.28.21 at 8 p.m. on YouTube & Facebook

Part VI

Herr, wenn die stolzen Feinde schnauben, BWV 248^{VI}

Thursday, 2.4.21 at 8 p.m. on YouTube & Facebook

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PART I

PRESENTERS

Michael Marissen
Daniel R. Melamed

CHORUS

SOPRANO

Amy Nicole Broadbent
Margot Rood

ALTO

Sarah Davis Issaalkhoury,
soloist
Roger O. Isaacs

TENOR

Jacob Perry, Jr.
Gregório Taniguchi,
soloist (Evangelist)

BASS

Steven Combs, *soloist*
Jason Widney

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN

Andrew Fouts,
concertmaster
Tatiana Chulochnikova

VIOLONE

Jessica Powell Eig

BASSOON

Anna Marsh

HARPSICHORD

Leon Schelhase

VIOLA

Risa Browder

FLUTE

Colin St-Martin
Kathryn Roth

TRUMPET

Josh Cohen, *soloist*
Joelle Monroe
Dennis Anthony Ferry

ORGAN

Adam Pearl

VIOLONCELLO

John Moran

OBOE, OBOE D'AMORE

Geoffrey Burgess
Margaret Owens

TIMPANI

Michelle Humphreys

TEXT & TRANSLATION

**ORATORIUM welches die heilige Weyhnacht
über in beyden Haupt-Kirchen zu Leipzig
musiciret wurde. Anno 1734.**

**Am 1sten Heil. Weyhnacht-Feyertage, frühe zu
St. Nicolai und nachmittage zu St. Thomæ.**

Tutti

Jauchzet, frohlocket, auf, preiset die Tage,
Rühmet, was heute der Höchste getan!
Lasset das Zagen, verbannet die Klage,
Stimmet voll Jauchzen und Fröhlichkeit an!
Dienet dem Höchsten mit herrlichen Chören,
Laßt uns den Namen des Herrschers verehren!

**ORATORIO that was performed musically over
the Christmas season in the two principal
churches in Leipzig. 1734.**

**On the first day of Christmas, early at St.
Nicholas and in the afternoon at St. Thomas.**

All

Shout, exult, arise, praise the days [of Christmas],
Glorify what the Most High this day has done!
Leave off faintheartedness, ban lamenting;
Break forth into song, full of shouting and
rejoicing!
Serve the Most High with glorious choirs;
Let us revere the ruler's name!

Normal = free poetry *Italics = scriptural text* **Bold = chorale text**



TEXT & TRANSLATION (cont'd.)

Evangelist

Es begab sich aber zu der Zeit, daß ein Gebot von dem Kaiser Augusto ausging, daß alle Welt geschätzt würde. Und jedermann ging, daß er sich schätzen ließe, ein jeglicher in seine Stadt. Da machte sich auch auf Joseph aus Galiläa, aus der Stadt Nazareth, in das jüdische Land zur Stadt David, die da heißet Bethlehem; darum, daß er von dem Hause und Geschlechte David war, auf daß er sich schätzen ließe mit Maria, seinem vertrauten Weibe, die war schwanger. Und als sie daselbst waren, kam die Zeit, daß sie gebären sollte.

Recitativ

Nun wird mein liebster Bräutigam,
Nun wird der Held aus Davids Stamm
Zum Trost, zum Heil der Erden
Einmal geboren werden.
Nun wird der Stern aus Jakob scheinen,
Sein Strahl bricht schon hervor.
Auf, Zion, und verlasse nun das Weinen,
Dein Wohl steigt hoch empor!

ARIA

Bereite dich, Zion, mit zärtlichen Trieben,
Den Schönsten, den Liebsten bald bei dir zu
sehn!
Deine Wangen
Müssen heut viel schöner prangen,
Eile, den Bräutigam sehnlichst zu lieben!

Choral

**Wie soll ich dich empfangen
Und wie begegn' ich dir,
O aller Welt Verlangen,
O meiner Seelen Zier?
O Jesu, Jesu, setze
Mir selbst die Fackel bei,
Damit, was dich ergötze,
Mir kund und wissend sei.**

Evangelist

Und sie gebar ihren ersten Sohn und wickelte ihn in Windeln und legte ihn in eine Krippe, denn sie hatten sonst keinen Raum in der Herberge.

Evangelist

But it happened at that time that a commandment went out from the emperor Augustus that all the [Roman] world be appraised. And everyone [from Judea] went, that he might have himself appraised, each one to his [ancestral] city. Then Joseph too made out to go up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into the Jewish region to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, this, because he was of the house and lineage of David, so that he might have himself appraised with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was pregnant. And while they were there, the time came that she should give birth.

Recitative

Now will my most beloved bridegroom,
Now will the champion from the tribe of David—
For the consolation, for the salvation of the
earth—
At last be born.
Now will the star out of Jacob shine;
Its stream of light is already breaking forth.
Arise, Zion, and forsake weeping now;
Your well-being lifts on high!

ARIA

Make yourself ready, Zion, with tender desires,
To see the Most Handsome, the Most Beloved,
Soon at your side! This day your cheeks
Must sparkle much lovelier;
Hurry on, to love the Bridegroom most ardently!

Chorale

**How shall I receive you,
And how shall I meet you,
O desire of all the world,
O decoration of my soul?
O Jesus; Jesus, set
The torch next to me yourself,
So that whatever brings you enjoyment
May be manifest and known to me.**

Evangelist

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, for they otherwise had no space in the lodgings.

TEXT & TRANSLATION (*cont'd.*)

Choral und Recitativ

Er ist auf Erden kommen arm,
Wer will die Liebe recht erhöhen,
Die unser Heiland vor uns hegt?
Daß er unser sich erbarm,
Ja, wer vermag es einzusehen,
Wie ihn der Menschen Leid bewegt?
Und in dem Himmel mache reich,
Des Höchsten Sohn kömmt in die Welt,
Weil ihm ihr Heil so wohl gefällt,
Und seinen lieben Engeln gleich.
So will er selbst als Mensch geboren werden.
Kyrieleis.

ARIA

Großer Herr, o starker König,
Liebster Heiland, o wie wenig
Achtest du der Erden Pracht!
Der die ganze Welt erhält,
Ihre Pracht und Zier erschaffen,
Muß in harten Krippen schlafen.

Choral

Ach mein herzliebes Jesulein,
Mach dir ein rein sanft Bettelein,
Zu ruhn in meines Herzens Schrein,
Daß ich nimmer vergesse dein!

Chorale and recitative

He has come on earth poor,
Who will properly extol the love
That our Savior feels for us?
That he might have mercy on us,
Indeed, who is capable of perceiving it,
How human suffering moves him?
And might make [us] rich, in heaven,
The Son of the Most High comes into the world
Because its salvation pleases him so well
And [might make us] equal to his dear angels.
That he himself wants to be born as man.
Lord have mercy.

ARIA

Great Lord, o mighty King,
Most beloved Savior, o how little
Do you regard the earth's splendor!
He, who upholds the entire world,
[Who] has created its splendor and decoration,
Must sleep in harsh mangers.

Chorale

Oh my beloved little Jesus,
Make for yourself a perfectly soft little bed,
To rest in the shrine of my heart,
That I may never forget you!

(transl. Daniel R. Melamed and Michael Marissen)





PART II

PRESENTER
Daniel R. Melamed

CHORUS

SOPRANO

Katelyn Aungst
Laura Choi Stuart, *soloist*

ALTO

Reginald Mobley, *soloist*
Kristen Dubenion-Smith

TENOR

Matthew Hill
Jacob Perry, Jr.,
soloist (Evangelist)

BASS

Steven Combs
David Rugger, *soloist*

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN

Andrew Fouts,
concertmaster
Tatiana Chulochnikova

VIOLONCELLO

John Moran

OBOE D'AMORE

Margaret Owens
Fatma Daglar

HARPSICHORD

Leon Schelhase

VIOLA

Risa Browder

VIOLONE

Jessica Powell Eig

OBOE DA CACCIA

Geoffrey Burgess
Sarah Huebsch

ORGAN

Adam Pearl

FLUTE

Colin St-Martin, *soloist*
Kathryn Roth

TEXT & TRANSLATION

Am 2. Heil. Weyhnachts-Feyertage. Frühe zu St. Thomæ. Nachmittage zu St. Nicolai.

Sinfonia

Evangelist

Und es waren Hirten in derselben Gegend auf dem Felde bei den Hürden, die hüteten des Nachts ihre Herde. Und siehe, des Herren Engel trat zu ihnen, und die Klarheit des Herren leuchtet' um sie, und sie furchten sich sehr.

Choral

**Brich an, o schönes Morgenlicht,
Und laß den Himmel tagen!
Du Hirtenvolk, erschrecke nicht,
Weil dir die Engel sagen,
Daß dieses schwache Knäbelein
Soll unser Trost und Freude sein,
Dazu den Satan zwingen
Und letztlich Friede bringen!**

On the second day of Christmas. Early at St. Thomas. In the afternoon at St. Nicholas.

Sinfonia

Evangelist

And there were in the same vicinity shepherds in the field, by the live-stock pens; they guarded their flocks by night. And look, the Angel of the Lord approached them, and the radiance of the Lord lit up around them, and they were very afraid.

Chorale

**Break out, o lovely morning light,
And let heaven dawn!
You shepherd folk, do not be alarmed;
For the angels tell you
That this weak little boy
Shall be our comfort and joy,
[Shall] vanquish Satan, too,
And finally bring peace!**

Normal = free poetry *Italics = scriptural text* **Bold = chorale text**

TEXT & TRANSLATION (cont'd.)

Evangelist

Und der Engel sprach zu ihnen

Engel

Fürchtet euch nicht! Siehe, ich verkündige euch große Freude, die allem Volke widerfahren wird; denn euch ist heute der Heiland geboren, welcher ist Christus, der Herr, in der Stadt David.

Recitativ

Was Gott dem Abraham verheißen,
Das läßt er nun dem Hirtenchor
Erfüllt erweisen.
Ein Hirt hat alles das zuvor
Von Gott erfahren müssen;
Und nun muß auch ein Hirt die Tat,
Was er damals versprochen hat,
Zuerst erfüllet wissen.

ARIA

Frohe Hirten, eilt, ach eilet,
Eh ihr euch zu lang verweilet,
Eilt, das holde Kind zu sehn!
Geht, die Freude heißt zu schön,
Sucht die Anmut zu gewinnen,
Geht und labet Herz und Sinnen!

Evangelist

Und das habt zum Zeichen: Ihr werdet finden das Kind in Windeln gewickelt und in einer Krippe liegen.

Choral

**Schaut hin, dort liegt im finstern Stall,
Des Herrschaft gehet überall.
Da Speise vormals sucht ein Rind,
Da ruhet itzt der Jungfrau'n Kind.**

Recitativ

So geht denn hin, ihr Hirten, geht,
Daß ihr das Wunder seht!
Und findet ihr des Höchsten Sohn
In einer harten Krippe liegen,
So singet ihm bei seiner Wiegen
Aus einem süßen Ton
Und mit gesamtem Chor
Dies Lied zur Ruhe vor:

ARIA

Schlafe, mein Liebster, genieße der Ruh,
Wache nach diesem vor aller Gedeihen!
Labe die Brust,
Empfinde die Lust,
Wo wir unser Herz erfreuen!

Evangelist

And the angel said to them:

Angel

Fear not! Look, I announce to you great joy, which will come to all people; for to you this day is born in the city of David the Savior, who is Christ, the Lord.

Recitative

What God had pledged to Abraham,
He now lets be shown to the chorus of shepherds
As fulfilled.
About all of this a shepherd [Abraham]
Had to hear from God beforehand; and now also a
Shepherd has to be the first to come to know the
deed—
What he [God] at that time had promised—
As fulfilled.

ARIA

Joyful shepherds, hurry, oh hurry,
Before you tarry too long;
Hurry, to see the pleasing child!
Go, the joy is all too lovely;
Seek to gain the refinement [of this child];
Go and refresh your hearts and minds!

Evangelist

And take this for a sign: you will find the child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

Chorale

**Look there, yonder in the dark stall lies he whose
Lordship ranges all over [to the ends of the
earth].
Where once an ox sought food,
There now rests the Virgin's child.**

Recitative

So go forth, then, you shepherds; go,
That you may see the marvel!
And should you find the Son of the Most High
Lying in a harsh manger,
Then sing for him by his cradle
—In a sweet tone
And with united choir—
This lullaby:

ARIA

Sleep, my Most Beloved, enjoy your rest,
Awake after this for the flourishing of all!
Refresh your breast,
Feel the delight
[There, in your rest], where we gladden our hearts!

TEXT & TRANSLATION (cont'd.)

Evangelist

Und alsobald war da bei dem Engel die Menge der himmlischen Heerscharen, die lobten Gott und sprachen:

Chor der Engel

Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe und Friede auf Erden und den Menschen ein Wohlgefallen.

Recitativ

So recht, ihr Engel, jauchzt und singet,
Daß es uns heut so schön gelinget!
Auf denn! Wir stimmen mit euch ein;
Uns kann es so wie euch erfreun.

Choral

**Wir singen dir in deinem Heer
Aus aller Kraft Lob, Preis und Ehr,
Daß du, o lang gewünschter Gast,
Dich nunmehr eingestellt hast.**

Evangelist

And immediately there was with the angel the multitude of the heavenly legions, lauding God and saying:

Chorus of angels

May honor be to God on high, and peace on earth, and to humankind [God's] great pleasure.

Recitative

Quite right, you angels: shout and sing
That for us this day has prospered so beautifully!
Arise then! We will join with you in song;
It can gladden us just like you.

Chorale

**We sing to you, amid your host,
With all our power, "laud, praise, and honor,"
That you, o long desired guest,
Have now presented yourself.**



PART III

PRESENTER
Michael Marissen

CHORUS

SOPRANO

Elijah McCormack
Margot Rood, *soloist*

ALTO

Roger O. Isaacs
Reginald Mobley, *soloist*

TENOR

Matthew Loyal Smith
Gregório Taniguchi,
soloist (Evangelist)

BASS

Steven Combs
Jonathan Woody, *soloist*

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN

Andrew Fouts,
concertmaster, soloist
Tatiana Chulochnikova

VIOLONCELLO

John Moran

VIOLONE

Jessica Powell Eig

VIOLA

Risa Browder

FLUTE

Colin St-Martin
Kathryn Roth

OBOE, OBOE D'AMORE

Margaret Owens
Geoffrey Burgess

TRUMPET

Josh Cohen
Joelle Monroe
Dennis Anthony Ferry

TIMPANI

Michelle Humphreys

HARPSICHORD

Leon Schelhase

ORGAN

Adam Pearl

TEXT & TRANSLATION

Am 3. Heil. Weyhnachts-Feyertage. Zu St. Nicolai.

Tutti

Herrscher des Himmels, erhöere das Lallen,
Laß dir die matten Gesänge gefallen,
Wenn dich dein Zion mit Psalmen erhöht!
Höre der Herzen frohlockendes Preisen,
Wenn wir dir itzo die Ehrfurcht erweisen,
Weil unsre Wohlfahrt befestiget steht!

Evangelist

*Und da die Engel von ihnen gen Himmel fuhren, sprachen
die Hirten untereinander:*

Chorus

*Lasset uns nun gehen gen Bethlehem und die Geschichte
sehen, die da geschehen ist, die uns der Herr kundgetan
hat.*

On the third day of Christmas. At St. Nicholas.

All

Ruler of heaven, give heed to our babble,
let our feeble songs please you,
when your Zion extols you with psalms!
Hear the exultant praises of our hearts,
when we now show you reverence
because our welfare stands fast!

Evangelist

*And when the angels went away from them into heaven,
the shepherds said to one another:*

Chorus

*Let's go, now, into Bethlehem and see what the story
is that's taking place there, which the Lord has made
known to us.*

Normal = free poetry *Italics* = scriptural text **Bold** = chorale text



TEXT & TRANSLATION (*cont'd.*)

Recitativ

Er hat sein Volk getröst,
Er hat sein Israel erlöst,
Die Hülff aus Zion hergesendet
Und unser Leid geendet.
Seht, Hirten, dies hat er getan;
Geht, dieses trifft ihr an!

Choral

**Dies hat er alles uns getan,
Sein groß Lieb zu zeigen an;
Des freu sich alle Christenheit
Und dank ihm des in Ewigkeit.
Kyrieleis!**

ARIA

Herr, dein Mitleid, dein Erbarmen
Tröstet uns und macht uns frei.
Deine holde Gunst und Liebe,
Deine wundersamen Triebe
Machen deine Vätertreu
Wieder neu.

Evangelist

Und sie kamen eilend und funden beide, Mariam und Joseph, dazu das Kind in der Krippe liegen. Da sie es aber gesehen hatten, breiteten sie das Wort aus, welches zu ihnen von diesem Kind gesaget war. Und alle, für die es kam, wunderten sich der Rede, die ihnen die Hirten gesaget hatten. Maria aber behielt alle diese Worte und bewegte sie in ihrem Herzen.

ARIA

Schließe, mein Herze, dies selige Wunder
Fest in deinem Glauben ein!
Lasse dies Wunder, die göttlichen Werke,
Immer zur Stärke
Deines schwachen Glaubens sein!

Recitativ

Ja, ja, mein Herz soll es bewahren,
Was es an dieser holden Zeit
Zu seiner Seligkeit
Für sicheren Beweis erfahren.

Recitative

He has comforted his people,
he has redeemed his Israel,
sent salvation out of Zion,
and ended our suffering.
Look, shepherds, this he has done;
go, you will come upon this!

Chorale

**All this he has done for us
to show his great love;
for this let all of Christendom be glad
and thank him for this in eternity.
Lord have mercy!**

ARIA

Lord, your compassion, your mercy
comforts us and makes us free.
Your pleasing favor and love,
your wondrous desires,
make your Fatherly faithfulness
new again.

Evangelist

And they came in a hurry and found both Mariam and Joseph, and also the child lying in the manger. But when they had seen it, they spread the word that had been told to them of this child. And all who met with it were surprised at the account that the shepherds had told them. But Mary kept all these words and tossed them about within her heart.

ARIA

My heart, include this blessed marvel
steadfastly in your faith!
Let this marvel, [let all] the Godly deeds,
be ever at hand for the strengthening
of your weak faith!

Recitative

Yes, yes, my heart should safeguard
what it at this pleasing time,
for its [eternal] blessedness,
has experienced as sure proof.

TEXT & TRANSLATION (*cont'd.*)

Choral

**Ich will dich mit Fleiß bewahren,
Ich will dir
Leben hier,
Dir will ich abfahren,
Mit dir will ich endlich schweben
Voller Freud
Ohne Zeit
Dort im andern Leben.**

Evangelist

*Und die Hirten kehrten wieder um, preiseten und lobten
Gott um alles, das sie gesehen und gehöret hatten, wie
denn zu ihnen gesaget war.*

Choral

**Seid froh dieweil,
Seid froh dieweil,
Daß euer Heil
Ist hie ein Gott und auch ein Mensch geboren,
Der, welcher ist
Der Herr und Christ
In Davids Stadt, von vielen auserkoren.**

[Tutti]

[Herrscher des Himmels, erhöre das Lallen . . .]

Chorale

**I will safeguard you [in my heart
and memory] with diligence;
I will here [in this life] live to you;
to you will I retreat;
with you will I at last hover,
full of joy,
time no longer,
there in the afterlife**

Evangelist

*And the shepherds went back again, praising and lauding
God for all that they had seen and heard, just as had
been told to them.*

Chorale

**Be joyful meanwhile,
be joyful meanwhile,
that your Salvation
has been born here [on earth] as God and
also as man—he who is
the Lord and Christ,
in the city of David, chosen of many [cities].**

[All]

[Ruler of heaven, give heed to our babble . . .]

Normal = free poetry *Italics* = scriptural text **Bold** = chorale text



DANA MARSH, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dana Marsh began his musical training as a boy chorister at St. Thomas Church Choir School in New York and at Salisbury Cathedral in England. He earned his undergraduate degree in organ performance at the Eastman School of Music and received masters and doctoral degrees in historical musicology from the University of Oxford. Praised by *The Los Angeles Times* as an “energetic and persuasive conductor,” and by *The Washington Post* as “a superb choral conductor, energetic and precise,” Marsh has entered into fruitful collaborations with the London Mozart Players, Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal, the Choir of St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, the Portland Baroque Orchestra, and the Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, among others. As an acclaimed countertenor soloist and consort singer (1992–2008), he performed with the American Bach Soloists, Concert Royal of New York, New York Collegium, Seattle Baroque Orchestra, and the Academy of Ancient Music. As a singer/soloist with the Choir of New College Oxford while undertaking his D.Phil. research, he toured frequently with the Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the European Union Baroque Orchestra, recording 15 discs with New College Choir, one of which won the Gramophone award in early music in 2008. Marsh was Assistant Director of Music and Director of Chapel Music at Girton College Cambridge, and he currently serves as Director of the Historical Performance Institute at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

MEET THE PRESENTERS



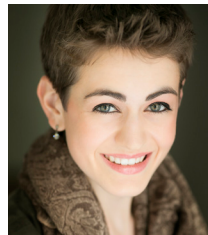
Michael Marissen is Daniel Underhill Professor Emeritus of Music at Swarthmore College, where he taught from 1989 to 2014. He has also been a visiting professor on the graduate faculties at Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania. His publications include *The Social and Religious Designs of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos* (Princeton, 1995), *Creative Responses to Bach from Mozart to Hindemith* (editor; Nebraska, 1998), *Lutheranism, anti-Judaism, and Bach's St. John Passion* (Oxford, 1998), *An Introduction to*

Bach Studies (co-author Daniel R. Melamed; Oxford, 1998), *Bach's Oratorios* (Oxford, 2008), *Tainted Glory in Handel's Messiah* (Yale, 2014), *Bach & God* (Oxford, 2016), and essays in *Harvard Theological Review*, *The Huffington Post*, *Lutheran Quarterly*, and *The New York Times*.



Daniel R. Melamed is professor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and serves as president of the American Bach Society and director of the Bloomington Bach Cantata Project. His books *Hearing Bach's Passions* and *Listening to Bach: the Mass in B Minor and Christmas Oratorio*, for general readers, are available from Oxford University Press.

MEET THE ARTISTS



With a voice that “shimmers” (DC *Metro Theater Arts*), Washington, DC-based soprano **Amy Nicole Broadbent** has garnered recognition as a versatile and dynamic performer. An advocate for new music, in 2016 Broadbent was selected by composer Robert Kyr as a soloist for the world premiere of his cantata *Song of the Beloved*. Professional achievements include winning first-place in the 2015 National Society of Arts and Letters' Winston Voice Competition, first place at local and regional levels of NATS competitions, and prizewinner for the New York Oratorio Society Competition at Carnegie Hall, the Annapolis Opera Competition, the Bethlehem Bach Competition, and the Franco-American Grand Concours Vocal Competition. As an ensemble musician, Amy has performed with many of the nation's top professional choirs. She is currently a vocalist in the United States Navy Band Sea Chanters Chorus, with the rank of Musician First Class. Amy holds degrees from the University of Maryland, College Park.

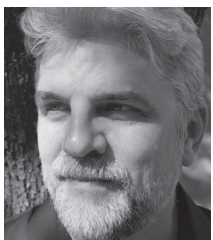


A native of the Washington, DC area, Baroque trumpeter **Josh Cohen** is greatly sought after by many leading early music ensembles throughout North America. For the past ten seasons, he has been principal Baroque trumpet with the Washington Bach Consort. He has also performed as principal and solo baroque

trumpet for ensembles such as Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal, Arion (Montreal), Bach Sinfonia (Washington, DC), Aston Magna (Boston), Musica Maris (Rhode Island), Houston Bach Society, and Ensemble Telemann (Montreal), and has participated in festivals such as the Indiana Festival of Early Music, International Festival of Baroque Music at Lameque (New Brunswick, Canada) and the Bach Festival of Montreal.

Mr. Cohen has recorded some of the most famous and demanding works for baroque trumpet. Most recently, he has recorded J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 2 with Montreal-based Ensemble Caprice. He can be heard on the Washington Bach Consort's recording of Bach's *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*, BWV 51, with soprano Elizabeth Futral. He has participated in two recordings with prominent Canadian ensembles, which were both nominated for the 2009 Juno Awards: *Let the Bright Seraphim* with soprano Karina Gauvin and Tempo Rubato, and Vivaldi's *Gloria* with Ensemble Caprice, the latter of which won the Juno award for Best Album of the Year in the vocal category.

Mr. Cohen received a M.M. from McGill University and a B.M. from the New England Conservatory of Music. He currently plays on a Baroque trumpet made by Matt Martin of Norwich Natural Trumpets after an original by Kodisch 1710.



As a Bach specialist, **Steven Combs** has performed the bass arias in the *B Minor Mass* and the arias and roles in Bach's *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passions* with many groups including the Washington Bach Consort, the National Cathedral and the

Washington Choral Arts Society.

As a concert artist he has sung in acclaimed performances of Orff's *Carmina Burana* with both the Washington Ballet and the Master Chorale of Washington. He also performed Poulenc's *Le Bal masqué* and Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* lieder with orchestra.

On the opera stage, Steven made his Metropolitan Opera debut in the world premiere of John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and also sang the title role in Colin Graham's first staging of Britten's *Billy Budd* at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. He has performed other principal roles with the

Metropolitan Opera, the Florentine Opera, and the Boston Lyric Opera.

Steven holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in vocal performance and is a past national winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.



Violinist **Andrew Fouts** is honored to have served as a concertmaster with the Washington Bach Consort since 2010. *The Washington Post* has praised his performances with the Consort as being "exemplary on the highest part, playing with clean intonation and radiant tone." Other mentions by the *Post* have praised his "deeply expressive solos" and "mellifluous sound and sensitive style."

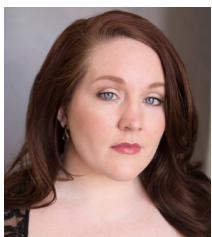
Hailing from Northern California, Andrew resides in Pittsburgh and is a member of the city's acclaimed early music ensemble, Chatham Baroque. The ensemble maintains a robust concert season, averaging 80 performances a year, comprising its Concert Series, Peanut Butter & Jam Sessions for kids, work in early childhood centers of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, touring across North and South America, and collaborations with other Pittsburgh arts organizations including the Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Festival Opera, Pittsburgh Camerata, Quantum Theatre, Carnegie Mellon, and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

The 17/18 Season includes appearances with Apollo's Fire, the Four Nations Ensemble, and in recital with Seattle harpsichordist Byron Schenkman.

In 2008 Andrew won first prize at the American Bach Soloists' International Baroque Violin Competition. He has taught at the Madison Early Music Festival and the Oficina de Música de Curitiba, Brazil, and can be heard on recordings with Chatham Baroque, American Bach Soloists, Philharmonia Baroque, Apollo's Fire, Musik Ekklesia, and Alarm Will Sound. His principal teachers were Charles Castleman at the Eastman School of Music, and Stanley Ritchie at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.



Matthew Hill, tenor, from Laurel, Maryland, enjoys a varied career as a soloist and ensemble singer, based in Washington, DC. Past solo concert work includes Handel's *Israel in Egypt* and *Messiah*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil*, Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, and the Evangelist in Bach's *St. Matthew* and *St. John Passions*. He also performs regularly with the American Bach Soloists, Washington Bach Consort, and Washington National Cathedral Choirs. As a choral musician, Matthew sings weekly at Christ Church Georgetown and is a member of the United States Air Force Band Singing Sergeants. Recent opera credits include his debut with Washington National Opera as Older brother in *Dead Man Walking*, Patre in Gounod's *Sapho* with Washington Concert Opera, Parpignol in *La Bohème* with Wolf Trap Opera, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with the Maryland Opera Studio, and Damon in *Acis and Galatea* with New Dominion Chorale. Matthew has won 2nd place in the National Society of Arts and Letters Dorothy Lincoln-Smith Competition, won the Choralis Young Artist Competition, 4th place in the Oratorio Society of New York Competition, 2nd place in Vocal Arts DC Art Song Competition, and 3rd place at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Middle Atlantic Regional Competition. Matthew received both his Master and Bachelor of Music degrees from the University of Maryland.



Sarah Issaekhouri is a teaching artist, instructor of voice, and primary-level music educator in the Washington, D.C. area. Her voice has been praised as, "...outstanding, tossing off coloratura with clarity and ease," (*The Washington Post*), and her singing career spans from medieval chant to contemporary music, including a wide range of compositional styles. As a guest soloist, Sarah has appeared with the Capitol Hill Chorale (Handel *Messiah*), The Virginia Consort (Bach *Magnificat*), the Oratorio Society of Virginia (Handel *Coronation Anthems*), Cathedral Choral Society (Einhorn Voices of Light), Fairfax Choral Society (Haydn *Lord Nelson Mass*), Charlottesville Symphony (Poulenc's *Gloria*), Cathedral Choral Society (Mozart *Requiem*), and more.



Patrick Kilbride received degrees from Northwestern University, University of Maryland Opera Studio, and fellowships from the Aspen Opera Theater Center and Tanglewood Music Festival. He made his U.S. debut in Monteverdi's

Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria with the Boston Early Music Festival. Winning the 24th International Concours de Chant in Clermont-Ferrand, France, he made his European debut in a French national tour of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* in 2015-2016. He has sung roles with Festival Aix-en-Provence, the Britten-Pears Aldeburgh Festival, Opera Lafayette and Heartbeat Opera, debuting at the Opéra royal de Versailles, Théâtre Gérard Philippe, Paris, Grand Théâtre Luxembourg, Snape Maltings Concert Hall, the Kennedy Center, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Upcoming performances include a new production of John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* with Opera Lafayette, appearances with the Washington Bach Consort, Cathedral Choral Society, and his debut at the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, Lisbon, Portugal.
www.PatrickKilbride.com



Particularly noted for his "crystalline diction and pure, evenly produced tone" (Miami Herald), countertenor **Reginald Mobley** is highly sought after for Baroque, Classical and modern repertoire. Recent highlights include an

extensive tour of sixteen concerts around Europe singing Bach's Matthäus-Passion with the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists led by Sir John Eliot Gardiner; an ensemble to which he returned for a further European tour, where international reviews commented on his "purity of timbre" and "homogeneity of tone." He also performed concerts of Händel's *Messiah* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Purcell's *King Arthur* with the Academy of Ancient Music in London, and Mozart's *Requiem* with Orkiestra Historyczna in Poland. Further highlights include tours of Germany with Freiburg Barockorchester, and Balthasar-Neumann Choir und Ensemble, performing at prestigious venues across Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium.



Jacob Perry Jr. is an avid chamber and solo tenor based in the Washington metro area. Gaining attention as a young soloist, he receives praise for his “gorgeous and stylish” interpretations of Renaissance and Baroque tenor

repertoire (ClevelandClassical.com). Jacob can be heard singing with such ensembles as the Les Canards Chantants, Art of Early Keyboard, the Clarion Choir, Yale Choral Artists, Cathedra, Washington Bach Consort, New Consort, and the Thirteen. He has been featured as a soloist with the City Choir of Washington, Handel Choir of Baltimore, Mountainside Baroque, Tempesta di Mare, and Apollo’s Fire. He has performed solo and chamber works by contemporary composers with Third Practice, hexaCollective, Great Noise Ensemble, and as an Artistic Director of Bridge, a chamber vocal ensemble based on Washington, DC. Jacob was born and raised in Silver Spring, Maryland. He earned a B.A. in Vocal Performance at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.



Margot Rood, hailed for her “colorful and vital” singing by *The Washington Post*, performs a wide range of repertoire, and is in demand as a soloist with conductors including Harry Christophers, Scott Metcalfe, Patrick Dupré Quigley,

Stephen Stubbs, Franz Welser-Möst, and Beth Willer.

Recognized particularly for her commitment to early music, Margot is a former Lorraine Hunt Lieberman Fellow at Emmanuel Music, where she is often featured on Emmanuel’s nationally-known Bach cantata series. She is frequently booked for Bach performances with the likes of Edinburgh’s Dunedin Consort, South Florida’s Enlightenment Festival, Handel + Haydn Society, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and the Washington Bach Consort. Handel’s *Messiah* is a signature piece, which she has performed with Toronto’s Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, TENET Vocal Artists, Seraphic Fire, Bach Collegium San Diego, Rhode Island Philharmonic, and New Jersey Symphony. Other appearances include Charlotte Symphony Orchestra and annual concerts as well as tours and recordings with acclaimed renaissance ensemble Blue Heron.

Margot is a recent recipient of the St. Botolph Club Foundation’s Emerging Artist Award for her work in

new music. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in the world premiere of Shawn Jaeger’s *Letters Made with Gold*. Recent and upcoming solo appearances also include the Cleveland Orchestra (*Stravinsky Threni*), Boston Symphony (*Benjamin Dream of the Song*), New World Symphony (Reich *The Desert Music*), and A Far Cry (Golijov *Three Songs*).

Notable recording releases include Blue Heron’s *Ockeghem Songs, Vol. 1*, *La Renommée* in Lalande’s *Les Fontaines de Versailles* and *La Paix* in Charpentier’s *Les Arts Florissants* with Boston Early Music Festival (CPO), and the role of Emily Webb on Monadnock Music’s recording of Ned Rorem’s *Our Town* (New World Records). She has recorded repertoire from the medieval to the 21st-century on the Coro, Albany Records, Blue Heron, BMOP Sound, Toccata Classics, and Sono Luminus labels. Her solo recording with composer Heather Gilligan, *Living in Light*, is now available. She can also be heard on Blue Heron’s *Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks Vol. 5*, which won the Gramophone Award for Early Music in 2018.

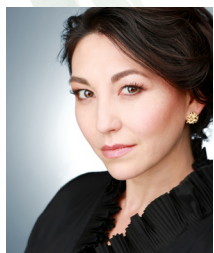


Possessed of a keen interest in seventeenth- and eighteenth century culture from a young age, **Colin St. Martin** began playing the traverso at the age of fourteen. He began his formal studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music

(Brussels, Belgium) receiving a First Prize under the tutelage of the renowned master, Bart Kuijken. St. Martin continued his studies with graduate work at Indiana University where he was the traverso instructor. From 1993 to 2010, St. Martin served as the early-flute professor at Peabody Conservatory. He continues to maintain a private studio, in addition to giving numerous masterclasses and performances throughout the USA. Mr St Martin is currently the traverso professor at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music.

As a performer, St. Martin has appeared with many of North America’s finest period-instrument ensembles, including Arcanum, Washington Bach Consort, Tafelmusik, American Bach Soloists, North Carolina Baroque Orchestra, Tempesta di Mare, Four Nations, Rebel Baroque Ensemble, Folger Consort, National Cathedral Baroque Orchestra and Opera Lafayette. Colin is also an active soloist in his home state of Texas, where he is the principal traverso player for Ars Lyrica Houston and the Houston Bach Society, in

addition to occasionally performing with the Mercury Ensemble. St. Martin's extensive recording catalogue contains a wide variety of repertoire on such labels as Centaur, ASI Gaudeamus, Lyrichord, Naxos, Focus and Newport Classic labels.



Hailed as "a lyric soprano of ravishing quality" by the *Boston Globe*, **Laura Choi Stuart** has appeared in mainstage roles with Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Boston, Annapolis Opera, Lake George Opera, the In Series, and

Opera North as Musetta, Adina, Gilda, Pamina, and Frasquita. Equally comfortable in early music, recital and concert settings, she was one of the 2009 Art Song Discovery Series winners for the Vocal Arts Society and 2nd prize winner at both the 2010 and 2012 National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Awards. Laura received her training at The Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program for Singers, Opera North, and Berkshire Opera, as well as The New England Conservatory and Dartmouth College.



Gregório Taniguchi crafts compelling performances that move audiences. His dedication to rhetoric in music draws listeners to hear historical works as a dynamic and living part of our musical culture, illuminating classics for a modern

audience. Contemporary vocal music and new works by emerging composers likewise come alive through his communicative artistry.

Gregório has empowered narratives with an intuitive sense for storytelling as the Evangelist in Bach's *St. John Passion* and *Christmas Oratorio*, Æneas in Cavalli's *La Didone*, Miles Zegner in Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up*, and Septimius in Handel's *Theodora*. He has toured Ecuador with the emerging ensemble Las Aves and presented historically-informed 17th-century Italian and Spanish sacred repertoire in the cathedrals of Quito during Holy Week. He advocates for the intimate connections created by chamber music and regularly presents recitals of classic and contemporary art song. He has worked closely with pioneers of the early music movement as well as the next generation, including Paul Elliott, Scott Allen Jarrett, Jeffrey Thomas, and John Butt. As one of the nation's finest choral artists, he has appeared with

Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Clarion Vocal Ensemble, Seraphic Fire, Cantus, Washington Bach Consort, Oregon Bach Festival, and Staunton Music Festival.

Gregório is passionate about being an active part of the community of artists, supporting composers in recording new works as a studio singer and in faith communities as a choral scholar. He also serves as a language coach, especially in his native Portuguese.



Bass-baritone **Jonathan Woody** is a sought-after performer of early and new music in New York and across North America. He has been featured with historically-informed orchestras such as Apollo's Fire, Boston Early Music Festival,

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Bach Collegium San Diego, Portland Baroque Orchestra and New York Baroque Incorporated, earning praise as "charismatic," "riveting," and "wonderfully dramatic." Jonathan is also committed to ensemble singing at the highest level and has performed with the Choir of Trinity Wall Street, TENET, the Clarion Music Society and New York Polyphony, among others. An avid performer of new music, Jonathan has premiered works including Ellen Reid's *prism* (2019 Pulitzer Prize winner), Ted Hearn's *The Source*, Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* (NYC premiere), and Du Yun's *Angel's Bone* (2017 Pulitzer Prize winner). He has appeared with Staunton Music Festival, Aldeburgh Festival, Portland Bach Festival, Carmel Bach Festival, Oregon Bach Festival, Opera Lafayette, Gotham Chamber Opera, and Beth Morrison Projects. Jonathan has recorded with the Choir of Trinity Wall Street (Musica Omnia), Boston Early Music Festival (RadioBremen), and New York Polyphony (BIS Records). Jonathan's musical pursuits extend beyond his voice and he has been commissioned as a composer for groups including Lorelei Ensemble, the Handel + Haydn Society, and the Uncommon Music Festival. Currently based in Brooklyn, NY, Jonathan holds degrees from McGill University and the University of Maryland, College Park, and is represented by Miguel Rodriguez of Athlone Artists.

www.athloneartists.com/artists/jonathan-woody/



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Part V

Ehre sei dir, Gott, gesungen, BWV 248^V

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Part VI

Herr, wenn die stolzen Feinde schnauben, BWV 248^{VI}

Thursday, 2.4.21 at 8 p.m. on YouTube & Facebook



ABOUT THE MUSIC: HOW SHALL I RECEIVE YOU?

Modern interest in J. S. Bach as a composer of church music owes a great deal to one celebrated moment: the Berlin performance of a version of his *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829 under the musical direction of Felix Mendelssohn. The context was a concert, not a liturgy; and the performing organization was the Berlin Sing-Akademie, a bourgeois amateur society that had been founded in the late eighteenth century to promote the private study of great music from the past for the artistic and moral edification of its middle-class members. The effect was sensational, beginning the restoration of Bach's large-scale concerted vocal music to the repertory.

To the concert repertory, that is—this music had become largely unsuited to its original liturgical purposes not long after Bach's death. This was only partly a matter of the notes; it was the text that created problems. Tastes in religious poetry changed rapidly, making the wild and graphic imagery of the *Passion's* recitatives and arias dated and perhaps tasteless. Even the chorales became outdated; the second half of the eighteenth century saw almost every hymn text revised to suit modern, more rationalistic tastes.

By the 1820s, Bach's passions and other concerted church music was historical, and it is no accident that its revival was in concert performances connected with cultural edification, with reverence for the past, and with a sense of that past as a foundation of German nationhood. The passions came to stand alongside the preludes and fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier and a few organ works in representing Bach. They were regarded as serious and weighty, full of labyrinthine harmonies and contrapuntal complexities, as well as tragic, lamenting, dramatic and morally uplifting.

Against this background, the *Christmas Oratorio* was the last of Bach's major vocal-instrumental works to be rediscovered. As writers on Bach's music encountered the *Christmas Oratorio* they found it difficult to square with the music of the

passions and with the style they expected from their composer. The oratorio, in contrast to the passions, was sunny and smiling, simple, and *galant*—even to the point of suggesting of doubt about Bach's authorship. (Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was suggested as a possible compiler, for example.) Its lighter style, aligning better with secular music, was a source of puzzlement.

And then they discovered the parody origin of much of the *Christmas Oratorio* in actual secular compositions—that Bach had reused music composed for other non-liturgical purposes, fitted with new texts. This created multiple problems, if not a crisis. Not only was there the musical style of the oratorio to deal with, there was also the issue of originality, closely associated in the nineteenth century with the concept of genius, and the apparent clash of the solemn purpose of Bach's sacred music with its frivolous secular origins.

The complete edition of Bach's works begun in 1850 was forced to confront this in the preface to its 1856 publication of the *Christmas Oratorio*. The strategy of the editor, Wilhelm Rust, was to emphasize the role of chorales, which were both sacred and original to the composition, and to declare that the apparent secular origin of the music was essentially a red herring. Bach knew all along, he suggested, that the music he composed for those secular occasions would find use in sacred works. Several problems disappeared with this assertion because the notes became sacred by their nature, conceived that way from the start and remaining so whether used in a secular work or a sacred one. The originality problem was inherently solved, too, because this explanation let Bach off the hook; if he had been planning to use this music in a sacred composition all along then there was no lack of imaginative genius anywhere in the process.

For commentators, there remained the fundamental problem of the *Christmas Oratorio's* apparent lack of seriousness and weight compared to Bach's passions, and for this there was an interpretive solution that dated from the earliest critical writings on the work dating from the 1840s. The musical antiquarian Carl von

Winterfeld argued that Bach's use of certain chorale melodies deepened the theological seriousness of the *Christmas Oratorio*, in particular by drawing the work closer to his passion settings.

His principal example is the first chorale in the work, "Wie soll ich dich empfangen?" The text is a verse of an Advent hymn that asks of Jesus, "How shall I receive you?" Bach set this chorale stanza to a melody that students of his music will certainly recognize, but the way Winterfeld identified it was essential. He called the melody "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden," familiar to many today in its English-language version, "O sacred head now wounded." This text is closely associated with the passion story and indeed is a chorale for Holy Week; it was part of a series of hymns that each reflected on a different body part of Jesus.

This was Winterfeld's opening and he charged through it, expressing wonder at the sounding of the notes of a passion chorale in a Christmas oratorio. He then argued for the close theological relationship between Christmas and Palm Sunday, and by extension to the passion story itself. He suggested that Bach anticipated the passion (and the *Passions*) by juxtaposing Christmas hymns like "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ" and "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her" (both heard in the Christmas Oratorio) with a chorale melody associated with the crucifixion narrative.

This interpretation accomplished several things. For one it made Bach into a deep and serious thinker about the nature of the Christmas story. For another, it tempered the joyous exuberance of the *Christmas Oratorio* with something somber and presumably more fitting. Most importantly, it tied the *Christmas Oratorio*, with its suspect lightness and connections to secular music, firmly to Bach's passions. This was particularly true because the *St. Matthew Passion*'s interpolated texts include no fewer than five verses of "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" and one verse of another hymn that uses the same melody; in many ways this chorale tune stood for that passion setting. And of course the *St. Matthew Passion* encapsulated everything that was valued about Bach.

This claim persists today—one runs across it again



Hans Rottenhammer (1564-1625), *Flower Garland Around a Painting of the Virgin and Child*, 1608.

and again in popular and critical writings alike. There is just one problem: In eighteenth-century terms it is almost certainly wrong. It is true that the melody Bach used for "Wie soll ich dich empfangen?" is today known as a passion chorale; in fact it is often called The Passion Chorale, as if there were only one. But this is a modern designation, and in fact one that almost certainly comes from the very centrality of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in the repertory. In Bach's time the melody was used for numerous different texts for different seasons, and tended to be identified as "Herzlich tut mich verlangen nach einem seel'gen End" (I long in my heart for a blessed end).

The *Christmas Oratorio* stanza "Wie soll ich dich empfangen?" is the first of an Advent hymn. It was not in the Leipzig hymnal, but there was an option open to Bach in setting it to music. Because hymn poetry was regular and limited to a relatively small number

of metrical patterns and stanza lengths, a hymn text could be sung to a variety of melodies. And in fact a 1736 hymnal published in Leipzig in which Bach had a hand suggests a tune for “Wie soll ich dich empfangen”: “Herzlich tut mich verlangen,” the melody Bach used in the Christmas Oratorio. But it is worth noting that the tune is not called “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden” there, and that the hymnal also suggests the tune for texts variously assigned to the evening, penitence, communion, Advent, the passion, divine sovereignty and providence, temporal suffering, praise and thanks, death, and the feast of the Purification. Each time it is identified not as “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden” (the passion text) but as “Herzlich tut mich verlangen,” a meditation on the believer’s wish for death and eternal joy. To Leipzig listeners, this was not exclusively or even primarily a passion melody

Winterfeld made the same argument about the final chorale of part VI of the *Christmas Oratorio*, which uses the same tune, this time splendidly set with trumpets and drums. The text, “Nun seid ihr wohl gerochen,” is a verse of the Christmas hymn “Ihr Christen auserkoren.” Like the first chorale in the oratorio it was not in the regular Leipzig hymnal, and its melody was probably not well known there. And as with the first chorale, Bach chose a tune that fit the meter—the same one as he used for “Wie soll ich dich empfangen.” Once again we are on shaky ground in claiming that his listeners would have heard a reference to the passion. We need to recognize that this was an argument with a purpose: drawing the *Christmas Oratorio* closer to the Bach passions with which it was implicitly and explicitly compared, and against which it had a hard time making a case for itself as a piece worthy of a devout composer.

The Berlin Sing-Akademie did not perform the *Christmas Oratorio* until 1857, the work’s first complete performance—Bach almost certainly never performed the whole work himself at one stretch, but rather over the course of six days spanning nearly two weeks. This performance was not so complete, however. It traversed all six parts of the oratorio but cut 17 numbers. A few of the eliminated movements were chorale settings (but not the “passion chorale”!) and one was a passage of gospel narrative, but most of the cuts were in solo music: eight of the work’s 13 arias and four of its 10 instrumentally accompanied recitatives.

This tipped the balance in the work towards the gospel narrative and to the framing choruses and chorales. It inverts the emphasis of the original, in which commentary in the form of poetic movements and chorales dominates. And with 200 chorus members and 50 instrumentalists, the Sing-Akademie’s performance of this version emphasized the powerful presentation of fully scored movements performed by large forces. The result resembled the cut-down versions of the *St. Matthew Passion* presented by the organization; those performances also eliminated most of the work’s arias, and their overall effect was dominated by movements like the opening chorus and by the gospel narrative. The elimination of so many of the *Christmas Oratorio*’s arias helped temper aspects of the work that seemed problematic (poetic texts and settings that called for solo vocal virtuosity) and drew the work closer to the form in which the *St. Matthew Passion* was known.

The reception of the *Christmas Oratorio* has continued to be influenced by that 1829 performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*, which set the tone for the understanding of all of Bach’s sacred music. The various strategies that appeared to bring the *Christmas Oratorio* closer to Bach’s passions succeeded in explaining a puzzling work, but they established a particular perspective, inviting its interpretation in relation to the passions. The question posed in the *Christmas Oratorio*’s first chorale, “How shall I receive you?” is worth asking about the work itself. One answer is that we can try to listen to it for its own merits; we do not have to make Bach’s passion settings our first point of engagement with this matchless music.

Daniel R. Melamed

Daniel R. Melamed is professor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and serves as president of the American Bach Society and director of the Bloomington Bach Cantata Project. The material here is adapted from his book for general readers *Listening to Bach: the Mass in B Minor and the Christmas Oratorio* published by Oxford University Press.

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Click below to purchase *Listening to Bach: the Mass in B Minor and the Christmas Oratorio* by Daniel R. Melamed online.

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